

Class No.....

[illegible]

(Corrected up to 31st May 1929.)

LIST OF MORE IMPORTANT INTERVIEWS GRANTED BY HIS
EXCELLENCY LORD IRWIN DURING THE LAST SIX MONTHS.

Abdur Rahim, Sir, K. C. S. I., Kt.

Note by His Excellency.—[I had an embarrassing interview with Sir Abdur Rahim, who came to protest, on the strength of confidential information that he had, against his name, though recommended by the Nizam for the post of President of Council, being turned down by the Government of India. He was eloquent and pathetic by turns in pleading his own virtues and claims for consideration. He was wholly at a loss therefore to know why Government could have conceived him unfitted for the post.

I told him that I was not familiar with the details of the case, as it was some time since I had seen any reference to it on papers. I did recollect having seen his name suggested in connection with the post of President, but did not know at what precise stage the matter might now be. I certainly had no recollection of it having been asserted against him that any particular incident had unfitted him for consideration. But he would recognise that the responsibility of the Government of India in such a matter was limited to endeavouring to assist the Nizam to secure the most capable service that was possible. I was under the impression that the conversation was premature, inasmuch as Sir Kishen Pershad had not, so far as my knowledge went, yet resigned.

(I should like to speak to Political Secretary about this next time I see him.)]

As he was going out, he asked me whether I still took an interest in the affairs of Bengal. I replied, certainly; but that the affairs of Bengal seemed to be in a rather distressful state everywhere at the moment. In reply to this

*P. S. V.,—You might draft me a line to the Governor of Bengal telling him of this information.

(Id.) I.
22-3-29.

he said that the Governor could get a Ministry whenever he liked by inviting Abdur Rahim to join it.

[22-3-29.]

Aiyar, The Hon'ble Sir C. P. Ramaswami, K. C. I. E.—

Note by His Excellency.—I had a long talk with C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar to-day. I began by telling him that I was not concerned any more than I expected he was with whether, as he might think, the appointment of a Parliamentary Commission had been a mistake, or whether as I thought the boycott had been a mistake. What was of much greater importance to us all was the future. It seemed to me that the Indian nationalist, using the word in its widest and best sense, had three principal nuts to crack—

- (1) Muslims (and other minorities),
- (2) Princes,
- (3) British Parliament.

Leaving aside (1) and (2), I was very gravely concerned with the effect of the present proceedings on the mind of Parliament. From this point of view it seemed to me very unfortunate that even those of his friends, who proclaimed their adherence to Dominion Status, should for the sake of an artificial unity speak in such equivocal terms about the policy of independence. From their own point of view, this was very foolish; and, from a wider point of view, suicidal.

[] Copy sent to Pol. Secy. with d.o. from P. S. V., dated 23-3-29.

* Done. Letter to Govr., dated 23-3-29.

He replied by saying that personally he had never much believed in the boycott, but on return to non-official life had not thought it an important enough issue to break with his party on. He himself and a good many of his friends proposed to go to England next year, and would there have the opportunity of, and no objection to, meeting Simon. But he could assure me that there could be no compromise between Liberals and those who wanted Independence and they would make this plain at a very early date.

I said I was pleased to hear this, although I thought events might easily prove that such eleventh hour intervention was less effective than it might have been earlier.

I then led him on to the question of their (Liberal) policy in regard to the next stage before the Joint Parliamentary Committee. I said that, if they thought it necessary to boycott that, I should lose any hope of getting things back into smoother waters. He at once said that, if his friends did follow such a course, he and many others would resign from the Liberal Federation, and break it up. But he could safely say this because he knew the situation would never arise. They would not wish on principle to challenge the authority of Parliament at that stage, nor would there be any sense in doing so.

He hoped that the same procedure would be followed on that occasion as last time; *i. e.*, that representative bodies (Muslims, Liberals, &c., &c.) would be invited to send delegations over. He did not like the idea of the Central Legislature trying to elect a team from outside its own ranks—

- (a) they would not wish to do it;
- (b) any such composite team would spell compromise in one way or the other;
- (c) the Legislature would be sure to insist on giving it hampering instructions.

He would much sooner let Liberals speak Liberal things; Moslems and everybody else in the same way stating their own views undiluted. He expressed the view that, if representative organisations were by that time, as he thought they would be, willing to go before the Joint Parliamentary Committee, the Legislature would probably agree to send a team of its own too.

He concluded by saying rather cryptically, in reply to an observation of mine that I was glad to have a chance of a talk and often wished it was easier to get similar opportunities, that it was possible in the course of the next few months some of them might wish to come to me for advice. This I assured him was always at his service.

Our conversation was most friendly, and on the whole encouraging in regard to the point of view from which we have recently been considering the future. He thought a good deal obviously would turn upon proceedings of different bodies in Calcutta. If the Congress went for Independence, there would be a strong move to break up the Congress as no longer national, and substitute the All-Parties' Convention for it.

He mentioned the possibility of an attempt being made to have conversations between British Indian politicians and certain of the Princes. Nothing was settled and the initiative was I understood being taken on the British Indian side.

I doubt the probability of any such idea maturing in very practical form at present, but, if it did, I should fancy it might be useful to the British Indian politicians to appreciate the difficulties in that quarter more clearly than they have yet done.

[26-12-28.]

Allen, Mr. C. T.—

Note by His Excellency.—I had a talk to C. T. Allen afterwards, who raised two concrete points.—

- (1) The Country League.

He did not wish myself or any Governor to take any steps, by way of public speech or such like, to recognize formally the Country League as a pro-Government party, or identify Government formally with it. But what he did wish was that, in Provinces, officers concerned with administration—either in districts or at headquarters—should, if they were asked by those whom the Country League had approached, be prepared to say that, as far as they knew, it was a sound organization and stood in the main for sound fundamental principles of administration and was, therefore, deserving of their support. I told him I should have no difficulty in writing to Governors on these lines, and he undertook to let me have a note of his views which I could either forward or frame in a letter of my own.

(2) He told me of various projects that he had for securing some direction under good influence of the Press operating in India, and in this connection asked me specifically whether, without making any direct bargain, he could give any assurance to the Maharaja of Darbhanga or Sir Victor Sassoon that, if they supported the scheme, their work would receive recognition at the hands of Government. I told him that I was afraid on this point I must be entirely unhelpful, as it was quite impossible for Government or myself to give any sort of hypothetical undertaking of the kind suggested. Such things had a way of reacting and leading to charges of broken faith and worse. He recognized the force of this position and seemed to drop the request. I told him that, if I were in his position, I should approach the individuals concerned on the ground of public duty and, if he thought well, public and private interest; and that there would be no objection, so far as I was concerned, to his saying that, if they helped him in the way suggested, he would, if they so desired, represent what they had done to Government in due course, so long as he made it entirely plain that he could in no way, direct or indirect, give any assurance of the result of such representations.

He further suggested that I might tell the Secretary of State in confidence of what he was trying to do, and, while telling him of the general line I had felt compelled to take, say at the same time that, if the project developed, we might desire later on to examine means of affording some recognition to those who had helped it.

[17-8-28, 24-1-29.]

Ayyar, Mr. Alladi Krishnaswami.—Is Advocate-General to the Government of Madras.

Note by His Excellency.—Some general talk about politics, in which the most interesting thing he said was that there was a noticeable growth of opinion throughout Madras Province in favour of constructive action in the Councils, which was impelling the Congress party to reconsider their attitude about acceptance of office.

As regards the Madras High Court he pleaded that the best men should be brought from England to fill Barrister vacancies. The Chief Justice was shortly to retire and he hoped a good appointment would be made.

[9-5-29.]

Birla, Mr. G. D.—

Note by His Excellency.—After some preliminary discussion about the Public Safety Bill (on which he said that the opposition of the Nationalists and Independents might be modified if “some kind of trial” could be provided, and that a conference on the subject might be helpful), he turned rather obviously on to general politics.

Motilal and Malaviya were both very anxious to find a way out and Winterton’s answer in the House of Commons about the J. P. C., seemed to him hopeful. If such an invitation to Indian leaders could be addressed by His Majesty’s Government, it would be better than if it came from the J. P. C., for this would suggest “giving evidence” rather than “conferring”.

I told him whatever value there might be in this idea, the time-limit of a year made the position very difficult. He said that had been a great mistake and nobody liked it. But he hoped I would see Motilal and possibly Gandhi; and he was confident he could find a solution for the present troubles which were causing them considerable disquiet. I thanked him and again said that I thought all this would have been easier if the other side had not bolted so many doors.

His manner and what he said left me much disposed to feel that he was not saying what he did without the knowledge and concurrence of persons more important than himself.

[7-2-29.]

Burdwan, The Hon'ble Maharajadhiraja Sir Bijay Chand Mahtab Bahadur, G. C. I. E., K. C. S. I., I. O. M., of—.

Note by His Excellency.—Told me he had rather given up the idea of standing for Parliament, though this was still possible. But he was disposed now to think that he would like to be on the India Council, in succession to Mallick whom he expects to retire next June.

He might come and see me in Delhi and was going to let P. S. V. know when he was coming through. I expect I had better give him an hour *when he does*, if possible at 12-30 and ask him to luncheon. But await letter from him.

[28-12-28.]

Cooch Behar, Her Highness the Maharani of.—

Note by His Excellency.—I had a long talk with Her Highness the Maharani of Cooch Behar this afternoon. I began by pointing out that I thought her continued absences from India for long periods were quite incompatible with her duties as Regent of the Cooch Behar State, and that I was definitely of the opinion that she ought to remain in India for some appreciable time. She had only just come back from England, after being away much longer than had been anticipated when she first went, and to leave again immediately for another protracted term would inevitably create an unfavourable impression both in Cooch Behar State and, as I suspected, also in England. In my view therefore Her Highness ought to choose between continuing to take these long leaves of absence or demitting her duties as Regent of the State.

In reply to this Her Highness said that she was proposing to return to England some time in April of this year for reasons connected with her children. She wished to satisfy herself about the education of the elder ones and to be with the two younger ones, one of whom was ill. She would not however propose to stay in England beyond the beginning of next autumn and was quite prepared to come back to India in October. I told her that the view that both the Secretary of State and I had hitherto taken was that, if she insisted on returning to England in April, she ought to give up the Regency; but that, speaking for myself, I had formed this view on the assumption that this would mean her remaining in England through next winter, as I understood she was thinking of again hunting there. If she gave a definite undertaking to return to India in October, that would introduce a new consideration of which it was fair that account should be taken, and it might be possible to reach an understanding on the basis that she should not be called upon to resign the Regency at present unless she failed to be back in India by the 1st of November 1929.

She, for her part, thought this a not unreasonable proposal, but asked that, in that event, Government should assist her to get a passage in October.

If that programme were adhered to, she would hope to remain in India till October 1930, though for various reasons connected with the children she did not feel able to give a definite pledge to this effect at this moment.

I went on to speak to her of the somewhat unenviable prominence into which she appeared to have come during her time in England. Her Highness said that this was due to the mischief-making propensities of newspapers and that it was her misfortune and not her fault. I said that it was impossible for me to pronounce as between these last two alternatives, but that I had no doubt as to the fact and I had equally no doubt that it was this that was to blame for the pressure to which she had been subjected by Lord Birkenhead and Lord Peel to return to India. She said that she was aware of that, but repeated her statement that it was due to no fault of hers.

We then proceeded to discuss the question of the arrangements for the young Maharaja and the other children. Her Highness appreciated the necessity of the Maharaja having a separate establishment; and I said that, if there were such a separate establishment under the management of a Joint Guardian, who should preferably be a married man, there would be no objection to her paying such visits to her son and the other children during the holidays as she might desire, or to her entrusting such of her other children as she might wish to the care of the young Maharaja's Guardian.

We discussed also the question of Captain Scott-Douglas in connection with the post of Joint Guardian. I said that I did not happen to know either him or Lady Blanche Scott-Douglas, but that I understood the Secretary of State was making enquiries in regard to their suitability. If he was satisfied as to this, Her Highness, on her side, was quite prepared to accept them in that post. Her Highness would propose, unless she brings the two younger daughters back to India, to place them all in the Maharaja's establishment under the care of the Joint Guardian.

We discussed also finance in general terms. Her Highness would clearly keep the lakh to which she is entitled, and was quite willing to have an arrangement made by which provision for the other children should be made from State funds to be administered by the Joint Guardian, whoever that might be. She said however that her lakh, by itself, would be insufficient to maintain her during her visits to England, and at the same time during her visits to India, on the supposition that she continued to hold the post of Regent, and suggested some arrangement by which, so far as I understood, her lakh and the three lakhs—or whatever it is—that is at present allotted for household expenses in conjunction with the maintenance of the children, should be pooled during an experimental period to see how finance actually worked out. I told her that I was not competent to discuss details of finance and suggested that on this it would be convenient for her to talk to the Political Secretary. She quite agreed, and I undertook to ask the Political Secretary to place himself in communication with her. She is staying with the Maharaja of Bikaner.

[18-2-29.]

Ghuznavi, Mr. A. H., & Suhrawardy, Dr. A.—

Note by His Excellency.—Mr. Ghuznavi and Dr. Suhrawardy began by reference to the question of elections. Ghuznavi was opposed to any postponement, while Suhrawardy wanted an announcement to be made that the Assembly was extended by one year, and then that dissolution should take place in January, his object being to provide an answer to his friends, and the friends of Government, against the suggestion that, if no extension were granted, this would be due to the machinations of Motilal, Gandhi & Co. I told him that his plan, though ingenious, seemed to me not very easy of adoption, and suggested that a good deal of his probable purpose might be met if and when an announcement of no extension were made, this were made in reasoned form, giving reasons adequate to justify a decision publicly.

They next proceeded to discuss, with some diffidence, the question of the raising of a Party Fund, and said that they were in the difficulty that they had nothing to offer to possible subscribers. Ministers in Provinces had influence for honours and patronage. I told them that it seemed to me they could very well appeal to different interests on grounds of personal advantage by way of insurance against political dangers, and Ghuznavi seemed

to think that, if they had Rs. 5 lakhs, they could do a great deal. I advised them to try and organise the collection of such a fund on the kind of grounds I had indicated through well-known and responsible names in each Province, beginning with Bengal.

The last point Suhrawardy mentioned was the inadequacy of the pensions granted to the Princes of Oudh, which matter they themselves had brought before me not long ago. I repeated to him the promise I had given to them that I would see the case myself before orders were passed.

[2-4-29.]

Iyer, Mr. C. S. Ranga.—Is an elected non-official Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Note by His Excellency.—Gave me the history of his row with Motilal; and said that the Swarajist party was a good deal divided. But did not I think tell me much I did not know before. Very strong that the elections should not be held on the heels of the Simon report. Apart from this had no strong view as to their date, but thought an extension of two years was a tall order.

[1-3-29.]

Kikabhai Premchand, Mr.—

Note by His Excellency.—I had a long talk this morning to Mr. Kikabhai Premchand, who wished to consult me about some of the lines of the Report he proposes to make in his position as member of the Central Indian Committee. I fancy it will not be what the Indian politician will consider a very progressive document.

[22-3-29.]

Malaviya, Pundit Madan Mohan.—

Note by His Excellency.—I had a long interview this morning with Pundit Madan Mohan Malaviya. He began by discussing the communist arrests and said that he, and others who thought with him, were afraid that it was a symptom of a desire on the part of Government to strike terror into the heart of India. I don't think for a minute he thought this really, and very rapidly acquiesced when I told him that Government had no idea except to see the law enforced and to prevent communists turning the place upside down. He regretted that I had not permitted the discussion of the motion in the Assembly, as he thought it would have tended to soothe feelings. I told him that that was not generally my experience of an excited debate in a popular body and that in any case I had had little doubt that it would have been quite impossible for any debate to take place on the decision of Government to apply for warrants for the arrests without involving the discussion of the evidence on which they acted. As this was evidently impossible, there seemed little left that could be debated.

I don't think he disagreed with all this and seemed to betray very little resentment. From this we passed to a general political discussion which he initiated and which resolved itself into an exposition by him of his tentative views concerning the Central Executive under the reforms. He did not in fact say much more than he had said to me in Simla, but he made it plain that his idea—and I should suppose the idea of Motilal, though he didn't say so—is to have three or four Ministers drawn from the Assembly and two or three officials in a Unitary Cabinet. They don't want dyarchy because they think that that would not be consistent with the general picture which is much more palatable to them of responsible government with reservations. Among such reservations

he freely admitted the necessity of Foreign Affairs, Defence, some aspects of Home Administration. But, as I gathered from him, he would expect to see his reservations operated in different ways. He evidently strongly favours the idea of an agreed military budget only *pro forma* votable in the Assembly, with the Assembly having the power only to vote upon any extra money demanded above the basic figure. He had not thought out many of the difficulties of working such a constitutional arrangement, and not infrequently took refuge in saying that such and such a problem was one of the things of course that must be and could be discussed and settled. It all goes very much to confirm my feeling about the importance of the method of approach and of the actual framing that is given to any scheme and the phraseology employed to describe it.

[22-3-29.]

Mohammad Yaqub, Maulvi.—

Note by His Excellency.—(1) Said he had heard disquieting rumours in regard to Simon's intentions about separate electorates and wished to ask whether he should bring a representative Moslem deputation to me before I left for England.

I told him that he would be wise not to take rumours at their face value; and that he had better wait and see what Simon did say. Next year, if at all, would be the time for him to bring a deputation. He was quite satisfied.

(2) Pressed for Raza Ali to succeed Habibullah, in preference to Fazl-i-Hussain.

(3) Shafaat Ahmed Khan for India Council.

To both these points I listened without of course giving him any reply.

[16-5-29.]

Patro, Rao Bahadur Sir A. P., Kt.—Has had an interview with His Excellency.

Note by His Excellency.—Chairman of Madras Provincial Committee. He had some talk about Reforms. He wants full Provincial autonomy, with reserve powers to Governor. I gathered he did not want much present change in the Central Government, and, as long as this remained unchanged, he favoured indirect election from Provincial Councils. I pointed out some of the objections to this. He was generally very reasonable and anxious to work in with Government. On the question of the postponement of elections, he wanted them postponed till report was out. Otherwise they would not have much to fight on. He was strong about this.

[30-3-29.]

Purshotamdas Thakurdas, Sir.—

Note by His Excellency.—I saw Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas this morning. Although he did not disapprove of the arrest of communists, he was in a state of white and righteous indignation about the search that had been conducted in the premises of the Free Press. Apparently, as I had not known before, he, Jayakar, Sethna and Birla are directors of the Free Press, and he thought it a monstrous act of discourtesy that Government should have issued a search warrant against their premises without first approaching them. Had this been done they would, of course, have given every help in their power, or, had they hesitated to do so, nothing could have prevented Government sending a *clear the line* telegram. I must confess that, as he spoke, he evoked some sympathy from my mind; but beyond trying to soothe him by telling him that, if I was in his position, I would no doubt be as cross as he was, I made no attempt to do more than say we must clearly now wait and see what has happened. To this he agreed, and hoped that, if Government

were wrong in the suppositions that had led them to raid the offices and if, as he said they would, they found all sorts of evidence that the Free Press was above suspicion, we should not be above saying so.

He concluded by inviting me to read the speech he had just delivered on the Finance Bill, which, I understand, dealt with the general policy to be adopted by His Majesty's Government on the Indian constitutional problem. He is closely concerned to see something done on sufficiently generous lines to enable moderate opinion to justify itself before the world for having remained moderate. He suggested he might possibly write to me in this connection during the next two or three weeks, and I assured him I should be always pleased either to hear from him or to see him if he desired to bring anything to my notice.

[22-3-29.]

Roy Chowdhury, Mr. K. C.—Is a nominated Member of the Bengal Legislative Council representing the labouring classes of Bengal. He takes interest in labour organisations and was the President of Ranigunge Central Labour Association. Served on the Committee for Workmen's Compensation.

Is a Councillor of the Corporation of Calcutta.

* *Note by His Excellency*—

Two main points—

(1) Trade Union Congress was now political; not really representative of labour, and Government of India made a mistake in drawing its Geneva representative from it. Other bodies circularised to submit names for this purpose had given up replying because representative was always chosen from Trade Union Congress.

(2) Urged me to convene a conference of employers to press them to do more welfare work and have Works Committees.

Speak to Mitra.

[26-12-28.]

Roy, Rai Bahadur Tarit Bhushan.—

Note by His Excellency.—I had a talk this afternoon to Rai Bahadur Tarit Bhushan Roy. His principal desire was to impress upon me the importance of postponing the elections—as I gathered—for a year, with the object of enabling the electorate to have the Simon Report before it. He was also anxious to get as much time as possible to organise the agricultural and depressed classes against the domination of the intelligentsia. I discussed some of the difficulties that I felt in regard to his proposal, which he appeared to admit without allowing them to shake his general conclusion as to the desirability of postponement.

The most interesting thing he told me was that Srinivasa Iyengar also wanted postponement and had asked my interviewer to tell me that he (Srinivasa) was now in favour of accommodation and, what he called, adjustment, which Roy said meant that he hoped to form a new party, shake off Motilal and get that new party to agree to a policy of taking office, and so on. I am not sure whether the idea of taking office would necessarily in his mind be as incompatible as it seems to mine with any propaganda in favour of independence.

[23-3-29.]

Sarvadhikary, Sir Deva Prasad, Kt., C. B. E.—

Note by His Excellency.—Said the “moderates” like himself were miserable at all the Independence talk.

Sapru had made a great mistake in “cognetting”, when he ought to have condemned.

Would like to come and see me again for ten minutes after All Parties' Convention. I should like to see him.

[20-12-28.]

Note by His Excellency.—Came to tell me about the proceedings in the All-Parties Convention, and was very pleased at having got a good vote in favour of Dominion Status, with the omission of the Lucknow words, allowing anybody else to work for independence.

The Congress were much split on the point, but he thought they would probably patch something up. The Liberals were going to clinch the thing further at Allahabad; and their position was gaining strength. He hoped Government would, if it had opportunity, help them. I said that the first condition of Government being able to help them, if any means of doing so offered, was that they should range themselves boldly and broadly on side of Government, instead of as so often emulating people, much more extreme and less sane, in unmeasured criticism and condemnation of everything Government did. He was very disposed to be friendly and hopeful.

[27-12-28.]

Shahab-ud-Din, The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Chaudhri, M. L. C.—

Note by His Excellency.—We had a general talk. The Punjab he said was pretty contented, and everyone had great confidence in deMontmorency. The extremist movements were doing a little harm in the towns, but were not having much effect in the country. Lajpat Rai's incident and death had turned an unpopular and discredited man into a hero and a martyr. His own private view was that the police might have shown greater restraint and nothing would have happened. City people barked, but, unlike the country people, could not bite much.

On the whole he did not anticipate any serious trouble in the Punjab, and without this nothing much would happen in India! But there were only two general alternatives. Either concede everything or govern firmly. The choice seemed to me unduly limited.

He was very friendly; and suggested by implication that Government ought to work closely with and for Muslims.

[8-1-29.]

Srivastava, Mr. J. P.—Gave Rs. 500 to Thanksgiving Fund.

Note by His Excellency.—Told me that the United Provinces Committee report was nearly ready and was based on Sir M. Hailey's Punjab Plan.

He had had some talk with Motilal, who wants to find a way out; and who had said that he and others would be satisfied if the result turned out to be a scheme of reasonable “provincial autonomy” with *some* responsibility in the Central Government.

[21-5-29.]

Suhrawardy, Dr. A., & Ghuznavi, Mr. A. H.—

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[2-4-29.]

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